United Nations A/53/416

General Assembly

Distr.: General
22 September 1998

Original: English

Fifty-third session
Agenda items 15 (a), 18, 20, 30, 38, 42, 56, 71, 79, 87, 88, 89, 91, 92, 93, 94, 100, 101 and 102

Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs: election of five non-permanent members of the Security Council

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Oceans and the law of the sea

Assistance in mine clearance

Launching of global negotiations on international economic cooperation for development

General and complete disarmament

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations

Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations

Macroeconomic policy questions

Sectoral policy questions

Sustainable development and international economic cooperation

Environment and sustainable development

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

98-27855 (E) 131098

Crime prevention and criminal justice

International drug control

Letter dated 16 September 1998 from the Permanent Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit, on behalf of the President of the Federated States of Micronesia in his capacity as Chairman of the South Pacific Forum, the communiqué issued by the Heads of State and Government and representatives of the 16 member States of the South Pacific Forum at its twenty-ninth meeting, held in Palikir, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, on 24 and 25 August 1998.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 15 (a), 18, 20, 30, 38, 42, 56, 71, 79, 87, 88, 89, 91, 92, 93, 94, 100, 101 and 102.

(*Signed*) Masao **Nakayama**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Communiqué of the twenty-ninth South Pacific Forum, held at Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, on 24 and 25 August 1998

1. The twenty-ninth South Pacific Forum was held in Palikir, Pohnpei, on 24 and 25 August 1998 and was attended by Heads of State and Government of the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, and by representatives of Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Solomon Islands. The Forum Retreat was held on Pohnpei at the Village Hotel.

2. The Forum thanked the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia for their warm welcome and the generous hospitality provided to all delegations to the Forum and for the arrangements made for its meeting.

From reform to growth: the private sector and investment as the keys to prosperity

3. Leaders thanked the President of the Federated States of Micronesia for his presentation on the Forum theme "From reform to growth: the private sector and investment as the keys to prosperity". The Forum noted the importance of the private sector and investment as the keys to economic growth and agreed that efforts should be made to ensure macroeconomic stability by improving fiscal discipline, further advancing public sector reforms and broadening the tax base. It also emphasized the need to introduce a wide range of policy, legal, regulatory and institutional reforms which would provide the private sector with a more favourable and competitive business environment.

4. Leaders also thanked the Deputy Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea for the presentation on the sub-theme "Reform and the private sector: experience to date". Leaders emphasized the critical need for Forum Governments to implement their economic reform programmes through private sector participation that would encourage the promotion of economic growth and prosperity among member countries of the region.

5. Leaders recognized the importance of tourism and fisheries to the economies of its member countries, in particular smaller ones. The Forum heard presentations by the President of Kiribati on fisheries and the President of Palau on tourism under the sub-theme "Tourism and fisheries: key sectors for private investment and growth". Leaders gave strong endorsement to the proposed strategies for promoting those sectors as outlined in the presentations as well as in the outcomes of the second Forum Economic Ministers Meeting.

6. In recognition of the fundamental role played by education and training in enhancing the adaptability of Pacific islanders to the rapidly changing world and region, the Forum heard a presentation by the Prime Minister of Tonga on the sub-theme "Education: capacity-building for private sector growth", and agreed to address the key constraints identified in the presentation.

7. The Forum recognized the crucial importance of accessibility to capital and the need for improved dialogue between the private sector and financial institutions to better understand financial sector operations and how this can facilitate economic development. The Forum heard a presentation by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand on the sub-theme "Banks as the engine of growth in the private sector", which addressed that dimension of private sector development.

8. Forum Leaders asked the Secretary-General to consult members, agencies of the South Pacific Organizations Coordinating Committee and other multilateral organizations on a programme of action to advance the proposals contained in the thematic presentations and to report to the Forum Chair. In regard to the recommendations on fisheries, issues presented by the President of Kiribati, Leaders agreed that the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) should consider them and take appropriate action as early as possible. Leaders welcomed the offer by Kiribati to host the Fisheries Conference in Tarawa to advance those initiatives.

Forum Economic Ministers Meeting

9. The Forum welcomed the outcome of the second Forum Economic Ministers Meeting which was held in Nadi, Fiji, on 7 and 8 July 1998 and thanked the Government of Fiji for hosting the meeting. Leaders noted that good overall progress had been made in the implementation of the FEMM Action Plan, taking into account capacity constraints facing some members, the backdrop of region-specific difficulties, notably drought and other natural disasters, and the problems faced by some member countries as a result of the Asian economic crisis.

10. Leaders affirmed that the best way to respond to such difficulties is by continuing to strengthen their economies through pursuit of the Forum Economic Action Plan. They acknowledged that the success of the FEMM process depended on effective implementation of the Action Plan by member Governments.

11. Leaders were encouraged by the additional strategies and measures adopted by FEMM to enhance the impact of the Action Plan in furthering economic reform. Leaders endorsed specific recommendations concerning the region's response to undesirable financial activities, the promotion of competitive telecommunication markets, the development of information infrastructure as well as work related to the Forum Free Trade Area. They agreed that, when work on the free trade area framework is sufficiently advanced, a meeting of Forum Trade Ministers should be convened to make recommendations to the next Forum.

12. Recognizing the importance of efficient and effective communications services for both national and regional development, the Forum agreed to convene a Forum communications policy ministerial meeting. The aim of the meeting would be to promote competitive telecommunications markets and, taking into account social and rural/urban equity concerns, discourage unwarranted cross-subsidization between service sectors; work towards the development of a cooperative approach to information infrastructure and regulatory services; and examine developments in relation to international settlement rates for telecommunications services.

13. The Forum considered international settlement rates for telecommunications services and the very serious implications for some Forum island countries of the decision by the United States of America to adjust those rates with respect to its own telecommunications services. Leaders strongly urged the United States to recognize the adverse consequences for all Forum island countries of that decision and to respond favourably to their concerns in that regard.

14. The Forum recognized the special circumstances of the smaller Forum member countries in the implementation of economic reforms under the Action Plan and the need for strong support for their reform processes by regional organizations and the donor community.

15. The Forum directed that the Forum Secretariat continue to accord high priority to facilitating the implementation of the Action Plan and requested FEMM to report to the 1999 Forum on further progress in its implementation.

New Caledonia

16. The Forum noted the report by the Forum Chair on his visit to New Caledonia and expressed its appreciation to the Government of France and the authorities in New Caledonia for facilitating the visit. Forum Leaders also warmly welcomed the signing of the Noumea Accords by the two main parties in New Caledonia, the Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste (FLNKS) and the Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR), and the French Government.

17. The Forum reaffirmed its support for continuing contact with all communities in New Caledonia and reiterated its recognition of the rights of the people of New Caledonia to self-determination. In this regard, Leaders agreed to a continuing future monitoring role for the Forum Ministerial Committee on New Caledonia during the period of the Noumea Accords, particularly with respect to the referendums that will be conducted pursuant to the Accords.

18. The Forum issued a statement on observer status at the Forum for New Caledonia (appendix I).

19. The Forum further noted that the existing criteria for observer status would be re-examined in the light of New Caledonia's imminent admission as an observer at the Forum.

Forum Aviation Policy Ministers Meeting

20. Leaders welcomed the outcomes of the Forum Aviation Policy Ministers Meeting and recognized the value of the sectoral policy meeting format adopted in this case. It endorsed the Meeting's Forum Aviation Policy Action Plan and the progress made by the Secretariat in 1998 with respect to the work arising from the Meeting. It also agreed that another Forum Aviation Policy Ministers Meeting should be convened to review the Action Plan and report to the next Forum.

Future trade and aid relations between the European Union and the Pacific States members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group

21. The Forum noted that the Lomé Convention has been invaluable for its Pacific ACP members (Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) and acknowledged its appreciation to the European Union and its member States for their substantial contribution to the development of the region. It endorsed the outcomes from the Pacific ACP Ministers Meetings, held at Suva on 8 April 1998, including the proposed strategies for renegotiating the Lomé Convention.

22. The Forum welcomed the decision by Pacific ACP Ministers to support the expansion of ACP to include other Pacific island countries not at present parties to the Lomé Convention, namely Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Third session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Conference

23. Leaders welcomed the successful outcome of the third session of the Multilateral High Level Conference, now known as the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Conference, held at Tokyo in June 1998, and thanked Japan for hosting that important meeting.

24. Leaders also noted the positive strides in the negotiations for the development of a legally binding conservation and management arrangement which will ensure, on a cooperative basis with Distant Water Fishing Nations, the maintenance of a sustainable fishery in the region and enhance the economic security of coastal States, particularly those whose economies are highly dependent on this one resource.

25. The Forum further called on developed States to honour their obligations and commitments to provide financial assistance to facilitate the participation of Pacific island countries at future inter-sessional working group meetings and sessions of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Conference to help them discharge their management and conservation responsibilities.

Vessel monitoring system

26. The Forum reiterated its endorsement of the concept of a vessel monitoring system for FFA member countries, which will be progressively implemented for Distant Water Fishing Nations vessels operating in the exclusive economic zones of FFA member countries. Leaders also noted the opportunities for improved technology in such systems, which may enhance their roles in fisheries conservation and management. Leaders again called on Distant Water Fishing Nations operating in the region to support the vessel monitoring system initiative of FFA member countries.

27. Leaders welcomed the interest of the European Union and New Caledonia in concluding a fisheries agreement with FFA member countries and requested FFA to continue discussions on the matter with both the European Union and New Caledonia and provide further advice to FFA members. Leaders agreed to consider this again at the next Forum.

Special session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1999 on small island developing States

28. The Forum reaffirmed its endorsement of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States as a comprehensive framework with great potential for the region and commended implementation efforts currently under way at the national and regional levels.

29. Leaders endorsed the development of arrangements for the special session allowing for the involvement of non-United Nations members, and noted that specific mandates on a range of issues will be developed and brought to the next Forum Officials Committee Meeting for consideration.

30. Leaders noted that the special session to review the Programme of Action in 1999 represents an important opportunity for the region. They reiterated the importance of facilitating the participation of the Forum island countries in the special session and its preparatory process, and called on countries to pledge support through voluntary contributions.

31. The Forum agreed that in giving focus to the interests of small island developing States in the run-up to the special session, a single regional presentation should be made at the forthcoming inter-sessional meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The Secretariat was asked to arrange a meeting of members to coordinate those preparations.

32. Leaders, conscious of the importance of reliable data and information systems in the pursuit of sustainable development, endorsed the early implementation of the small island developing States information network (SIDSNET) activities in the region as part of its efforts to implement the Programme of Action.

Vulnerability index

33. The Forum reiterated the importance of the vulnerability index and commended the positive developments at the United Nations and within the Commonwealth as well as in the region towards the completion of a comprehensive vulnerability index encompassing

such factors as environmental and capacity considerations that can be broadly applied and included among the criteria for developing least developed country status and for deciding concessional aid and trade treatment.

34. The Forum agreed to pursue, as a matter of urgency in the appropriate United Nations and other forums, the deferral of a decision on graduation of any Forum member from the list of the least developed countries until an acceptable vulnerability index is developed and can be taken into account in classification decisions.

Climate change

35. Leaders adopted a statement on climate change (see appendix II).

Sea launch project

36. The Forum expressed its concern over the potential environment effects from the proposed sea launch project and called for a comprehensive environmental impact assessment of the proposal to be undertaken. It further agreed that this should be communicated to the United States of America in the post-Forum dialogue.

37. Leaders further agreed that there was a need for a consultative mechanism to be established in the region for considering the environmental and economic impacts of proposed developments such as this in international waters adjacent to the exclusive economic zones of Forum member countries.

Shipment of radioactive wastes

38. The Forum reiterated its position that shipments of plutonium and radioactive wastes through the region posed a continuing concern and agreed to adopt a consistent position on the issue, taking into account the risks of an accident occurring and the consequences of such an accident. It reiterated the expectation that such shipments should be carried out in a manner that addressed all possible contingencies and the concerns of relevant countries, including coastal States of the region. The Forum expected that shipments would be made only if the cargo is of demonstrably minimal risk, ships are of the highest standard and shipping States agree to promote the safety of the material and provide compensation for any industries harmed as a result of changes in the market value of the region's fisheries and tourism products in the event of an accident.

39. In this regard, the Forum noted the efforts of Japan, France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in providing information about the recent shipment of high-level wastes and expressed the hope that this would be continued.

40. Leaders agreed to pursue discussions with France, Japan, and the United Kingdom on the current liability regime for compensating the region for economic losses caused to tourism, fisheries and other affected industries as a result of an accident involving a shipment of radioactive materials, even if there is no actual environmental damage. After an assessment is made on the adequacy of such a regime, the Forum will consider strategies for ensuring that an adequate and comprehensive compensation scheme is put in place.

41. The Forum further agreed that members, through the Forum Secretariat, should pursue in the relevant international agencies a strong regime of prior notification to, and consultation with, coastal States on planned shipments of hazardous wastes, and the development of a regime for the preparation of environmental impact statements and emergency response plans.

Whale sanctuary

42. Leaders recalled their support in 1993 for the International Whaling Commission's moratorium on commercial whaling and the proposal to establish a Southern Ocean Sanctuary. The Forum continued to attach importance to the sustainable use of marine resources, noting that a greater level of protection for whales was appropriate, and also noting the internationally recognized need for sanctuaries to assist with the long-term conservation of great whales.

43. In this context, the Forum gave its support to the development of a proposal to establish a South Pacific Whale Sanctuary for great whales to complement the existing Indian and Southern Ocean Sanctuaries, with particular attention to the need to protect Forum members' traditional and cultural practices and the sustainable use of their marine resources. The Forum recognized that the issue was an important one for some dialogue partners and that it would be necessary to fully consult with them as part of this process.

Nuclear testing

44. The Forum reaffirmed its strong opposition to nuclear testing and condemned the recent tests by India and Pakistan. It expressed grave concern at the challenge that the recent nuclear tests constitute to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and its deep concern at the risk of a nuclear arms race in South Asia.

45. Leaders, in pursuit of genuine and universal disarmament, sought a successful outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, while focusing on key issues of interest to the region such as nuclear-weapon-free zones and cooperation between the nuclear-weapon-free zones in the southern hemisphere in particular, and the transport of nuclear materials in the region.

46. The Forum urged its members and those countries that have not already done so to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty before the end of the three-year period after the Treaty was opened for signature.

Anti-personnel landmines

47. Recalling their endorsement at their meeting in 1997 of international developments in the campaign to ban anti-personnel landmines, Leaders welcomed the signing of the Ottawa Convention, and commended the support for the Convention by members.

Biological weapons convention

48. Leaders also expressed their abhorrence of other weapons of mass destruction and expressed the hope that progress would be made for an early conclusion of a protocol to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention. Leaders also welcomed the initiative by Australia for a high-level meeting to assist in achieving this goal.

South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty

49. Leaders noted from the Secretary-General's report that there had been no further signatures or ratifications of the Rarotonga Treaty or its Protocols since the United Kingdom's ratification on 19 September 1997, and called upon the United States to promptly ratify the Protocols.

Results of the study on the radiological situation at the atolls of Mururoa and Fangataufa

50. The Forum noted that the finding of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) study indicates negligible residual contamination as a result of nuclear testing. Leaders recalled that the Forum had called for such a study to be carried out and expressed its appreciation of the fact that the results of the study had been presented to the region prior to publication and subsequent international scientific scrutiny.

51. Leaders commended Dr. Vili Fuavao for his participation as the Forum representative in the International Advisory Committee which undertook the study, as well as Dr. Shorten of the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, who represented the region at the International Scientific Conference at Vienna to review the results of the study.

52. Leaders agreed that the concerns of the Forum representative at the International Scientific Conference about the lack of geological detail in the International Atomic Energy Agency study on the radiological situation at the atolls of Mururoa and Fangataufa should be fully assessed and responded to.

53. The Forum called on France to carry out ongoing radiological monitoring of the environment on Mururoa and Fangataufa, and strongly urged France to address fully the concerns of the people of French Polynesia especially regarding the possible health effects of the nuclear testing programme.

54. The Forum called on all nuclear Powers that had conducted nuclear tests in the region to accept full responsibility and liability for past nuclear testing. Leaders also called on all States concerned to fulfil their responsibilities to ensure that sites where nuclear tests have been conducted are monitored scrupulously and to take appropriate steps to avoid adverse impacts on health, safety and the environment as a consequence of such nuclear testing.

55. The Forum recognized the special circumstances pertaining to the continued presence of radioactive contaminants in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and reaffirmed the existence of a special responsibility by the United States towards the people of the Marshall Islands, who have been, and are continuing to be, adversely affected as a direct result of nuclear weapons tests conducted by the United States of America during its administration of the islands under the United Nations Trusteeship mandate.

56. The Forum again reiterated its call on the United States to live up to its full obligations on the provision of adequate and fair compensation and the commitment to its responsibility for the safe resettlement of displaced populations, including the full and final restoration to economic productivity of all affected areas.

Regional security cooperation

57. Leaders expressed their deep sympathy at the tragic loss of lives in Aitape and commended Forum members and other donors that contributed in response to the tsunami tragedy in Sanduan Province, Papua New Guinea.

58. The Forum noted the briefing provided by the Deputy Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea on the progress made in restoring peace in Bougainville. It acknowledged that Bougainville remains an integral part of Papua New Guinea. It also noted the appreciation of the Government of Papua New Guinea for the assistance provided by members towards the reconstruction and rehabilitation programme and the peace process, including the participation in the Peace Monitoring Group. It welcomed these positive developments in Bougainville, and commended all members involved in bringing about peace and normalcy

on the island. Leaders also welcomed the United Nations positive response in dispatching a Peace Monitoring Team to Bougainville.

59. Leaders welcomed the report on progress in the implementation of the Aitutaki Declaration.

60. Leaders noted that a status of forces agreement might not be required at this stage, given that assistance could be provided in its absence, and that the secretariat was requested to coordinate model legislation and relevant agreement and report to the Forum Regional Security Committee (FRSC) at its next meeting. It further noted the circumstances under which a second meeting of FRSC might be convened in response to emergency situations.

61. Leaders also noted the existence of mechanisms for preventive diplomacy which can be useful in the peaceful and early resolution of conflict in the region, which include FRSC, the use of the good offices of the Secretary-General, eminent persons, fact-finding missions and third-party mediation and tasked the Secretariat to further consider the cost implications of these preventive diplomacy mechanisms, taking into account United Nations and Commonwealth practice.

62. The Forum expressed concern over the continued lack of progress in implementing the legislative priorities of the Honiara Declaration on Law Enforcement Cooperation and reiterated its commitment to ensuring that a regional legislative framework be put in place by the year 2000. Leaders endorsed the FRSC Action Plan to help members achieve this objective and welcomed Australia's offer to assist members in their implementation of these legislative priorities, acknowledging the limited capacity of some member States to meet the provisions of the Honiara Declaration.

63. The Forum noted the progress on work done by the South Pacific Conference of Police Chiefs and the Subcommittees on a Common Approach to Weapons Control and a Regional Consultative Mechanism on Security Issues of the Customs Heads of Administration Meeting and endorsed the Forum Secretariat's continued administrative support for specialist law enforcement agencies and as may be appropriate, funding support to undertake specific tasks as may be decided by FRSC.

64. Leaders endorsed the continuing role of FRSC as the body responsible for the oversight of effective regional law enforcement coordination amongst specialist law enforcement agencies and for the development of recommendations on policy approaches to broader regional security issues.

65. The Forum noted with concern recent acts of terrorism at Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, and Omagh with tragic loss of innocent lives. The Leaders reiterated their collective condemnation of international terrorism and reaffirmed their support for international cooperation aimed at its eradication.

Drug issues

66. The Forum welcomed the outcomes of the twentieth special session of the United Nations General Assembly, convened to consider the fight against the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, and the proposed new strategies, including practical measures and activities to address the problem of drug abuse and trafficking.

67. It further agreed to encourage its members to examine the specific outcomes of the special session and the proposed new strategies for implementation.

68. It further requested the Secretariat to provide to the 1999 Forum Regional Security Committee upon receipt of views and comments from members on the outcomes of the

special session of the General Assembly, a draft implementation schedule for a regional response that takes into account measures already being undertaken under the current Secretariat's five-year programme and the priority areas identified by members.

69. The Forum also called for early ratification and implementation by members of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, that Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol, the Convention of Psychotropic Substances of 1971, and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

Japan-Forum Leaders Summit

70. Leaders welcomed the opportunity to meet with Leaders from Japan at the South Pacific Forum-Japan Leaders Summit held at Tokyo in October 1997. The Forum expressed its appreciation to Japan for the initiative, which is another step forward in expanding the already strong links between the region and Japan. The Forum reaffirmed the value that the region places on this relationship as well as its commitment to the Joint Declaration issued at the conclusion of the Summit. The Forum welcomed the offer by the Prime Minister of Japan to host such Summits every two years.

Relations with the Association of South-East Asian Nations

71. The Forum welcomed the continued efforts by the region to establish closer relations with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), noting the possible value of reciprocal annual visits by the respective Chairs of the Forum and ASEAN, and encouraged continuing consultations between the respective Secretaries General.

Post-Forum dialogue

72. Forum Leaders welcomed the increased interest in the post-Forum dialogue meetings which are a major vehicle for multilateral political and economic consultations with the region's partners.

73. Leaders further accepted the following criteria for admission of a country to post-Forum dialogue status: long-established historical links with the region, which may include significant security links; significant trade and investment links with the region; long-term commitment to the region through participation in regional organizations and/or the establishment of diplomatic missions; cultural and social identification with communities in the region; development assistance to the region through bilateral and/or multilateral programmes; and shared interests or common positions on key international issues.

Canada Security Council candidature

74. The Forum supported and endorsed Canada's Security Council candidature.

Trade office in China

75. The Forum agreed that, while it supported the establishment of a trade office in China, these efforts should not be advanced further if sufficient additional funds cannot be identified.

Pacific Islands Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Centre

76. The Forum noted the progress made to date on the establishment of the Pacific Islands Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Centre and thanked Papua New Guinea for

its efforts to secure benefits for the Forum island countries from the APEC process, which should complement the role played by the Forum Secretariat on APEC matters.

Funding for South Pacific regional environment Programme headquarters

77. The Forum noted the current status of funding for the construction of a new headquarters for the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and expressed appreciation to Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Samoa for their contribution to the project.

78. Emphasizing the importance of environment issues and the work of SPREP in support of sustainable development in the region, Leaders encouraged Japan to assist with the proposed SPREP training and education centre component of the project, and called on other SPREP members and dialogue partners to support the project.

Commonwealth Secretary-General position

79. The Forum noted the importance of the Commonwealth at both the regional and international levels. It also noted that the position of Secretary-General of the Commonwealth will shortly be vacant and recalled that the first Secretary-General was from Canada, the second from the Caribbean and the third from the African region. It also recalled the New Zealand Government's intention to nominate the Rt. Hon. Don McKinnon for the vacant position. Leaders agreed that this vacancy represents an excellent opportunity to promote a candidate from among the South Pacific Forum members.

Compact renegotiations

80. The Forum took note of the upcoming economic negotiations between the Governments of the Federated States of Micronesia and the United States of America and wishes both Governments a successful renegotiation.

Expressions of appreciation

81. The Forum commended the outgoing Chairman, the Hon. Sir Geoffrey Henry, MP, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, for his leadership of the Forum over the past year. The Forum also warmly welcomed the new Secretary General, the Hon. Noel Levi, CBE, and thanked him for the successful arrangements and his support for the Leaders. It also extended its sincere appreciation to Mr. Tony Slatyer, Deputy Secretary General for his services to the Forum and wished him well as he leaves the Secretariat.

Date and venue of the next meeting

82. The Forum reaffirmed its appreciation and acceptance of the kind offer by Palau to host the thirtieth South Pacific Forum. The date for the Forum will be finalized by the Republic of Palau in consultation with the Secretariat.

Appendix I

Forum Leaders retreat statement on New Caledonia, 24 August 1998

1. Forum Leaders meeting today in Pohnpei have warmly welcomed the signing of the Noumea Accords.

2. Leaders agreed to a continuing monitoring role for the Forum Ministerial Committee on New Caledonia during the period of the Noumea Accords, particularly with respect to the referenda that will be conducted pursuant to the Accords.

3. Leaders agreed that the Forum would give favourable consideration to a formal request from New Caledonia for its admission to the 1999 Forum as an observer.

Appendix II

Forum Leaders statement on climate change

1. The Forum recognized and endorsed members' deep concerns regarding the impact of greenhouse gas emissions on rising sea levels and changing weather patterns on all Forum members, especially low-lying island nations, as recorded in the "Forum Leaders statement on climate change" issued at the twenty-eighth South Pacific Forum and the "Statement on climate change and sea level rise", issued by the seventh Economic Summit of Smaller Island States Leaders.

2. The Forum recognized the legally binding commitments agreed in the Kyoto Protocol as a significant first step forward on the path of ensuring effective global action to combat climate change.

3. The Forum encouraged all countries to sign the Kyoto Protocol and to work towards its earliest possible ratification.

4. The Forum urged that the momentum achieved in Kyoto be maintained and built upon at the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change in Buenos Aires in November 1998.

5. The Forum highlighted the importance of the implementation of measures to ensure early progress towards meeting these commitments. They urged all Annex 1 Parties, especially the United States of America, the European Union, the Russian Federation, Japan, Canada and other major emitters to take urgent action in this regard.

6. The Forum called for the achievement of substantial progress in establishment of the rules for international implementation mechanisms, particularly emissions trading, the Clean Development Mechanism and Joint Implementation, to ensure that these mechanisms assist the effectiveness of greenhouse gas reduction efforts in the attainment of Kyoto commitments.

7. The Forum noted the recognition in the Kyoto Protocol of the importance of the adaptation needs of vulnerable Pacific island States. Leaders urged all parties to recognize the need for adaptation measures to be undertaken within Pacific island States. They called for adequate resources to be generated through the implementation mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol and the Global Environment Facility for the full range of adaptation measures.

8. The Forum recognized the importance of the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties initiating work to develop verifiable, enforceable, effective and transparent accountability mechanisms through emissions inventory monitoring, recording and reporting requirements, and supported the need for an effective compliance regime to back the legally binding commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. They called for work to commence at the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties on the elaboration of procedures and mechanisms with respect to non-compliance with the Protocol.

9. The Forum stressed that an effective global response to the problem of climate change required ongoing active cooperation and strengthened action by all countries, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and that developed country parties should take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof. The Forum commended recent work done by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme in support of prior informed consent procedures in international negotiations and recommended that this continue. The Forum stressed the urgent need to initiate a process to develop procedures and future time-frames for wider global participation

in emission limitation and reduction efforts in which significant developing country emitters would enter into commitments that reflect their individual national circumstances and development needs.

10. The Forum recommended that these positions should be actively advocated by Forum member countries and the Forum Chair, who would work together to advocate these positions to other countries and any broad grouping that members can influence in the lead up to, and at, the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties in Buenos Aires and beyond.